1: Herskovits E-4, 6 (1926) 1927 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

cured during the night, they wait for daylight. Salt is added to the hole, "so that the evil eye cannot take it (for magic purposes), for with salt it spoils very quickly." Neither the hole nor its contents are held to be of future importance, and though the child may be shown where the cord and placenta were buried, by that time nothing will remain of it which might be of use to a maker of charms. After three or four days the cord falls off and muscat powder is applied to heal the wound cleanly. The bit of cord is saved, and if the child becomes ill, this is boiled and the water given as a drink. Occasionally an entire umbilical cord is dried and retained; and one woman spoke of the cord of her mother as still being in existence.

The mother is also bathed in water in which calabash leaves and other ingredients have been steeped, and after being carefully dried, a band is tightly tied about her abdomen to give her support. A cloth is placed to cover the vagina, which is not cleansed until the following day, though after that the vaginal region is washed twice daily for some forty days. Red wine is given to women immediately after delivery to sustain them until food can be prepared. Bananas, salt fish, milk, chocolate, and a dish of stew made of chicken and rice are offered, and in most instances the women eat heartily.

The cloths used during childbirth are carefully guarded, the woman herself or a trusted member of her family seeing to the task of washing them, so as to prevent their being used for evil magic. If a miscarriage occurs, the fetus is buried in a hole dug in the floor of the woman's house while the woman herself is bathed and otherwise cared for as in the case of a normal delivery.

A woman is usually up and about three or four days after the birth of her child, or sooner if there is no one to help her with her household duties, in which case she may even be obliged to perform the heavy work of going to the river for water within the week, though she is careful not to bend down

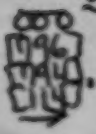
J: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

before returning for the night's effort. By midnight the dance is in full swing. Though individuals here and there may absent themselves for a time, the attendance remains relatively constant, until as the crowing of cocks marks the approaching dawn, the number of dancers begins to dwindle rapidly, and with full daylight few remain other than members of the family. Only rarely does a *vodun* dance last well into the morning; what one sees after sunrise are the poorer drummers beating their mediocre rhythms for the young people who continue a desultory circling about the central pole. This does not mean that the *vodun* deities shun the daylight. It is merely because the participants must hurry away to get into their Sunday clothes for early mass in the village church.

The obligations of the family giving a dance are clearly established by tradition. Most important is the *tonnelle*, which they must build, and the drums and their accessory gong and rattles, which they must furnish. The drummers are not paid, but are given much attention when the refreshments that must be provided are distributed. These usually take the form of *clairin*, though coffee and bread may also be offered the guests early in the morning. The *clairin*, or raw rum, is passed from time to time, but not in sufficient quantity to cause inebriation. Those who supplement this with a generous supply of their own, and show the effect of it, are regarded with anything but approval.[9] Other accessories for the dance which must be at hand are the banners used to salute the deities, and the candles and water needed to bring those possessed out of the more violent stages of their seizures. If anything else is required or the guests desire further refreshments, these may always be bought from the women who set up their little stands at every dance.

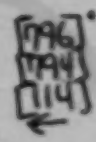
Drums, iron, and rattles are indispensable for a *vodun* dance. The drums, of the characteristic hollow-log African type, tuned with pegs inserted in the sides and reinforced with twine wound about the stretched heads of cow-hide or goat-

Lc Manuscrits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 8V3 Haiti 8V3
Mirebalais



contents, is given by Wirkus, 178–9.

• Compare this description with the *humfort* pictured in Johnston, p. 194.



• It is to be emphasized that in the course of the *vodun* rituals witnessed during this field-work, none of the "frenzy of the blood lust" that is so favorite an aspect of these ceremonies with writers of books on Haiti was encountered. As an extreme example of this heightening of the tone with which a ceremony is described, the work of Seabrook may be cited, for phrases such as "blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened" used by him mark perhaps an all-time record for distortion of the inner discipline of the *vodun* cult.

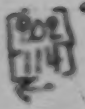
• Cf. Parsons's brief sketch, (I), 172–3, of a *mangé loi*, though the "bloody anointing" of which she speaks was not seen to occur in Mirebalais *services*. Detailed descriptions of what apparently were *services* are given by Wirkus, 168 ff., who, though honest in recounting what he saw, realized nothing of its significance; and Seabrook (pp. 54–70), who reads so much into what he purports to have witnessed that the entire account is rendered useless.

CHAPTER X

• Compare Parsons (I), 167–72.

• The drunkenness at serious dances reported by Parsons (I), 172, and others, would not be tolerated in Mirebalais.

• Price-Mars (I), 208, gives the name of *asotór* for the great drum.



• Much nonsense has been written concerning these drums. Many writers – all non-Haitians – stress the existence of a drum language, which seems to be an assertion of dubious truth.

• This is a striking example of what Dorsainvil (I), 73–4 and 131 ff., calls the *masque vaudouique* in detailing the effects of possession on the features of the possessed. See also the discussion of possession in Price-Mars (I), 122–3. The Gede possession described by Craige, 73–4, must, on the basis of customary Haitian behavior under possession, be subject to reinterpretation.

• Cf. Parsons (I), 172.

S: Courlander S-6 (1937-1945) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

violently. The bounsi complain that Maît' Grand Chimin treats them as though they were flour being ground in a mill:

Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'manmé Papa ça'm fai!
Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'manmé Papa ça'm fai!
Papa m'pas main moudrin!
Nous dit ou bouigit moin!
Papa m'pas main moudrin!
Nous dit ou bouigit moin! [Ex. 85]

Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!

When there is sickness within the société there may be songs for the absent ones. Here is a song for an ailing bounsi:

Moin allé wè li, bounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè ça, bounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè bouegue, bounsi malade oh! [Ex. 86]

I am going to see there, the bounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see it, the bounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see, bouegue, the bounsi is sick, oh!

Again, the members of the société call upon Ogoun, or St. Jacques, to help one of their number who is sick:

St. Jacques manié cheval li,
Li pas dit personne oh,
Vèyé li pou' moin!
Li mett guinguin vers,
Li mett guinguin malère nan dos,
St. Jacques oh!
Ba li levin pou' moin! [Ex. 87]

St. Jacques ties his horse,
He tells no one, oh,
Take care of him for me!
He may have worms,
He may have sores on his back,
St. Jacques, oh!
Protect him for me!

Ogoun is the dispenser of rum, and in virtually all Ogoun rituals rum is at some time or another in evidence. Sometimes rum is poured into a hot iron pot and burns into flame. The iron pot is described as Ogoun's

2: Courlander 8-6 (1939-1944) 1960 SV3 11681 SV3

house, which is on fire. But there is no grief, because Ogoun is the master of fire:

Pierre, Pierre Narcisse oh!	Pierre, Pierre Narcisse, oh!
Yago *monio-ô*!	*Yago monio-ô*!
Caille Ogoun brulé!	Ogoun's house is burning!
Gâdève Ogoun bel Dî	Ogoun's distillery is beautiful!
Na conoûl! [Ex. 88]	We console ourselves!

Some of the ritual songs that have persisted through the years have lost their explicit meaning but continue to survive because of beautiful melodies and perhaps the strange images they evoke. Such a song is this one to the lwa Atti Dzi, from the Dahomey service:

Atti Dzi oh!	Atti Dzi, oh!
Yo vayé dit moin	They sent to tell me
Min soleil malade!*	The sun was sick!
Quan'm sé rivé	When I arrived
Moin jainé soleil mouri!	I found the sun had died!
Quan'm sé rivé	When I arrived
Moin jainé soleil mouri!	I found the sun had died!
C'est regrettant ça	What grief it was
Pou'm enterré soleil! [Ex. 89]	For me to bury the sun!

One of the truly lovely songs of the Dahomey rites, both in melody and in lyrics, is the following one to the deity Ezilie. It shows clear evidence of Catholic ritual influence in both its text and its music. Ezilie Frèda, who seems to be speaking most of the lines, is identified with the Virgin Mary, and the tone of this piece casts her more in her Catholic role than her African. The deity is speaking from Yaguza, a place described as being "on the other side of the water." In form the song is atypical in that it has more than one movement and progresses from one idea to another.

Ezilie Noinain oh!
Ezilie Noinain oh!
Ezilie oh, c'est moin Yaguza!

Ezilie o'ap manché k'ap monté o'ap pouté pou' vouyo y'ap pouté pouin moin!
Ezilie o'ap manché o'ap monté pou' vouyo y'ap pouté pouin mouri!
Ezilie Noinain oh!
Ezilie Frèda oh Noinain oh!
Ezilie Frèda oh, c'est moin Yaguza!

Manhanou oh yo chèche nom caille li yo vié djoillé oh tout vouyo soleil pou lévé!
Manhanou yo pouté yo monté oh à gâmeau y'apé ghémaine la nuit pa!

*Some Haitian informants remarked that *soleil* means "sun." Others felt that this word in the song was really *lolé*, a diminutive of *Ardololi*, another name for Atti Dzi.

S: Courlander B-5 (1937-1954) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

men who have failed to join the coumbite, or praise the host, or single out various individuals for comment. The songs of the coumbite are a newspaper of the affairs of the people. The news is personalized, editorialized, and replete with comic vignettes.[a]

At noon the drummers signal a halt, and the workers shoulder their hoes, wipe off their machetes, and adjourn to the house for food. If it is a grand coumbite, the men rest for several hours, talking, catching up on sleep, or playing cards or *mayombe*. About three o'clock they go back to the fields to work until evening. Then comes the feast, under the canopy adjoining the house. The host and his wife have killed and cooked one or more goats, depending on the size of the group. The men are served meat, rice, beans, and whatever else has been prepared. Afterward, women join the party, and there is more tafia or rum. Some of the men then drift homeward, but most stay on for dancing. Zeze, Congo, or Juba drums are brought out, and the festivities begin. If another coumbite is not scheduled for the next day, the music and dancing may last well into the night.

Women, too, have coumbites to perform various kinds of large tasks, from field work to winnowing and coffee sorting, though in general the women's work groups lack the festive character of the men's gatherings.

There is a more tightly knit form of coumbite, known as a *société*. In southern Haiti there are the société Congo and the société Martinique; in northern Haiti there is the société Ciyé. These sociétés are clubs built around mutual work needs and recreational activities. The société Congo that appears in the town or city streets during Rara days, with bamboo or conch-shell trumpets, drums, flags, and masks, is usually composed of the men who have joined forces to till the fields. In some instances, it may also conform roughly to membership in a particular houmfor, or cult center. Unlike the ordinary coumbite, the société is not a group which meets only at ground-breaking or harvesting time; it is a permanent organization with regular, sometimes day-to-day, obligations. Week after week it moves from one man's land to another, doing the tasks that have to be done. There is no question of "Can you come?" The group goes first to one man's land, then to another's until all the work has been done. If a member of the société falls sick, so that he cannot work his own field, the société takes over his tasks for him.

Coumbites are held not only for agricultural work but for house-building, and sometimes for the building of a houmfor.

The Haitian cooperative work group has much in common with European and American husking and barn-building parties; but it has

[a] [For footnote see Category 116, p. 352. -- Ana 1957]

2: Courlander 9-5 (1937-1964) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

535 older man, they leaped into the air and came together in mock combat. First one would strike and the other would parry, then the second would strike and the first would parry, always in time to the beating Congo drums. On another signal all six dancers leaped into the air vertically, twisting into a full turn each time, landing in position to strike and parry.

Spectators standing around the dancers clapped their hands and sang:

539 Mouwondi na fai la guè!
Eya éya éya!
Nous c'est sanchon la guè!
Ou pas tendé canon'm tiré?

Mouwondi, we will make war!
Eya éya éya!
We are a nation of war!
Don't you hear my cannon shooting?

293 When the dancers and drummers seemed fatigued, they were offered rum to drink. The dancers drank without breaking step or interrupting the battle. The bearded man held the lip of his glass between his teeth, and without using his hands to steady it, tipped his head back and let the rum run into his mouth, all the while stamping his feet and leaping with the others.

164 I was told later that the Mouwondi was from the north, and that the dancers were recent arrivals from Port-de-Paix. But some of the older people declared that in former times the dance was known in the south by the name Calinda.

114 935 The Calinda dance, like the Vodoun, the Pétro, and several others, is mentioned frequently in the old literature on Haiti, Trinidad, Martinique, and Guadaloupe. It has been described variously as a funeral dance, an exhibitionistic sexual display, and a stick dance. It was reported by Saint-Méry as a dance in which men and women paired off. Early in the eighteenth century, Père Labat described it as a line dance, with the women on one side and the men on the other. Lafcadio Hearn saw it as a stick dance. And the word Calinda appears sometimes in songs of the Vodoun cult. The name may have lost specific meaning early in the life of the colonies; but it is more likely that early chroniclers used the term inexactly to refer to a multitude of different dances. In Haiti, 915 identification of the Calinda has been further confused by the existence of the Calinda secret society, which had special dances of its own, all called Calinda.

Although confusions and contradictions exist, the testimony of older Haitians is that the Calinda was a stick dance, known also by the name Mouwondi.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

spring water in the country districts is frequently

polluted by all sorts of excreta; the watering of milk is a common practice, and samples of milk have been generally found to contain many times the normal amount of bacilli. The cases of tuberculosis are practically always complicated by malaria.

Dysentery, when caused by bacilli, is epidemic in nature. In Haiti this form, known as "colerin," annually affects about a quarter of the rural population. Another type, caused by a variety of amoeba, affects another ten or twenty per cent, according to the region. Enteritis is less serious than dysentery but just as prevalent, being caused by protozoa and intestinal worms. Poor diet, the abuse of alcohol, premature weaning, and unwise nursing are also responsible. Granular conjunctivitis affected sixteen per cent of the children examined by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Cancer seems to strike only a normal number of Haitians; goitre is common in the mountain districts; leprosy has become a menace in the West and South; elephantiasis is present, particularly in the South; gusarola (characterized by patches of skin assuming different color) is fairly common in the Cul-de-Sac plain; chicken pox, influenza, and meningitis epidemics are occasionally serious.

The health of the peasant women is seriously and continuously endangered by their mode of life and work. It is customary for females, from girlhood onward, to carry heavy burdens on their heads—over steep paths in the mountains, along rocky trails, up hill and down. The commonest sight in Haiti is to see a woman swinging along with a great load of fuel, a tin of water, a bundle of building material, a basket of fruit, on her head. Cranial bones are flattened, the spine is bent, internal organs are strained or damaged. For ill-nourished persons to carry heavy weights for long distances with little rest means undue pressure on the heart and lungs, and so an increasing tendency to cardiac and pulmonary infections as well as chronic anemia. Overwork frequently results in miscarriages.

As has been said, childbirth often occurs by the roadside, on the way to market, or in the market place. In no case can a peasant woman remain in bed for a proper period either before or after parturition. Midwives are untrained; they use primitive methods which inevitably result in defective development of infants, lessened resistance to disease, high infant mortality, and a prevalence of abdominal diseases in women. Pressure of work, whether in the field or on the way to market, makes a mother soon stop nursing her

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

527 On Saturday nights one hears the drums beating all over the country, but if one follows the sound he is more than likely to end up at nothing more esoteric than a neighborhood dance. Other musical instruments than drums are rare, but any community has drums; and these set a rhythm to which one can dance. Generally food is available at these affairs, as well as drinks both hard and soft. It is not extraordinary to discover that a few of the men have drunk rather freely of clairin, the raw rum of the country; most drunkenness seems to lead to good-natured ribaldry rather than to offensive violence. It is unusual for a drunken man to cause damage of any serious nature. The dancing corresponds neither to American ballroom dancing nor to set folk dancing. Most of it is done solo, and an individual participates or remains on the outskirts of the enclosure as the mood of the moment impels him. Over the beat of the drum can be heard one of the current songs, more than likely a bit smutty in nature, and frequently poking fun at some well-known personage, or making allusions which in normal speech might seem crude.

One of the popular Sunday afternoon sports is the *gaguère*, or cockfight, held under a shelter back of a home. Much small betting goes on. The spectators sit or stoop close around the dusty ring, talking to the cock they are backing, commenting on the fight, offering advice to the owner. Between rounds the cocks are rubbed down, sprayed with water or rum, fondled and excited anew. Toward the latter stages of any fight the spectacle becomes gory and, to the uninitiated, distinctly cruel.

There is singularly little sport in Haiti. Élite youths play tennis; boys enjoy football; and swimming is a common diversion. Few sports are competitive and, so far as the writer has observed, the peasants have in their games practically nothing resembling organization.